

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Original) A method for producing a protein of interest in a host cell, wherein said host cell has been genetically modified in order to express significantly reduced levels of a metalloprotease comprising a HXXEH motif (SEQ ID NO 1), compared to the corresponding non-modified cell when cultured under identical conditions, the method comprising

- a) introducing into the host cell a nucleic acid sequence encoding the protein of interest,
- b) cultivating the host cell of step (a) in a suitable growth medium for production of the protein of interest, and
- c) isolating the protein of interest.

2. (Original) A method according to claim 1, wherein the metalloprotease further comprises a glutamic acid residue between 70 and 80 amino acids C-terminal of the second His residue in the HXXEH motif.

3. (Currently Amended) A method according to ~~any of the preceding claims~~ claim 1, wherein the metalloprotease further comprises a glycine residue 3 amino acids N-terminal of the first His residue in the HXXEH motif.

4. (Currently Amended) A method according to ~~any of the preceding claims~~ claim 1, wherein the metalloprotease further comprises a glycine residue 5 amino acids C-terminal of the second His residue in the HXXEH motif.

5. (Currently Amended) A method according to ~~any of the preceding claims~~ claim 1, wherein the metalloprotease further comprises a lysine residue 8 amino acids C-terminal of the second His residue in the HXXEH motif.

6. (Currently Amended) A method according to ~~any of the preceding claims~~ claim 1, wherein the metalloprotease further comprises a tyrosine residue 9 amino acids C-terminal of the second His residue in the HXXEH motif.

7. (Currently Amended) A method according to ~~any of the preceding claims~~ claim 1, wherein the metalloprotease further comprises a proline residue 10 amino acids C-terminal of the second His residue in the HXXEH motif.

8. (Currently Amended) A method according to ~~any of the preceding claims~~ claim 1, wherein the metalloprotease further comprises the consensus sequence SEQ ID NO 2.

9. (Currently Amended) A method according to ~~any of the preceding claims~~ claim 1 wherein the metalloprotease further comprises the consensus sequence SEQ ID NO 3.

10. (Currently Amended) A method according to ~~any of the preceding claims~~ claim 1, wherein the metalloprotease further comprises a NAXTXXXXT motif between 20 and 30 amino acids C-terminal of the second His residue in the HXXEH motif.

11. (Currently Amended) A method according to ~~any of the preceding claims~~ claim 1, wherein the metalloprotease is selected from:

- i) any one of the group consisting of SEQ ID NO's 4 to 15, and
- ii) a sequence which is at least 80% identical to any one of SEQ ID NO's 4 to 15.

12. (Currently Amended) A method according to ~~any of the preceding claims~~ claim 1, wherein the metalloprotease is at least 80% identical to the SEQ ID NO: 4.

13. (Currently Amended) A method according to ~~any of the preceding claims~~ claim 1, wherein the total amount of the protein of interest is increased at least 5% compared the corresponding non-modified cell when cultured under identical conditions.

14. (Currently Amended) A method according to ~~any of the preceding claims~~ claim 1, wherein the total amount of the protein of interest is increased at least 50% more than the corresponding non-modified cell when cultured under identical conditions.

15. (Currently Amended) The method according to ~~any of the preceding claims~~ claim 1, in which the host cell is a prokaryotic cell.

16. (Currently Amended) The method according to ~~any of claims 1-14~~ claim 1, in which the host cell is a eukaryotic cell.

17. (Original) The method according to claim 16, in which the host cell is a non-filamentous fungal cell.

18. (Original) The method according to claim 16, in which the host cell is a filamentous fungal cell.

19. (Original) The method according to claim 17, in which the host cell is a strain of *Saccharomyces*.

20. (Original) The method according to claim 19, in which the host cell is *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*.

21. (Original) A host cell useful for the expression of a protein of interest, wherein said cell has been genetically modified in order to express significantly reduced levels of a metalloprotease comprising a HXXEH motif (SEQ ID NO 1) than the corresponding non-modified cell when cultured under identical conditions.

22. (Original) A host cell according to claim 21, wherein the metalloprotease further comprises the consensus sequence SEQ ID NO 3.